

OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee

Meeting Summary

January 19, 2024

Conference Call

Scott Biggins, MD, Chair

Shimul Shah, MD, MHCM, Vice Chair

Introduction

The OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee (the Committee) met via WebEx teleconference on 01/19/2024 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Special Public Comment: Expedited Placement Variance
2. Liver Offer Filters Presentation

The following is a summary of the Committee's discussions.

1. Special Public Comment: Expedited Placement Variance

The Committee received a presentation about the *Expedited Placement Variance* proposal currently out for special public comment from the OPTN Executive Committee.

Summary of discussion:

Decision: There were no decisions made regarding this item.

A member asked how this would impact the timeline of developing future variance proposals from start to implementation. OPTN Contractor staff said the development of this proposal has moved quite rapidly, which has received some pushback, but the OPTN Executive Committee is hoping to find a balance between moving rapidly but also allowing for the community to participate in the policy development process.

The Vice Chair noted the long amount of time from seeing any formal policy proposal implemented as a result of the variance and thus a long time away from improving allocation for medically complex organs. The Vice Chair also expressed concern regarding the lack of representation from the Committee on the OPTN Expeditious Taskforce. The Vice Chair emphasized the importance of having liver experts review and approve variances related to liver allocation. The Chair commented that they would appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the committee level about any proposed protocols.

The Chair also spoke up about how during the Summer 2023 public comment cycle, the Committee unanimously spoke up against the OPTN Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) Committee's *Modifying Organ Offer Acceptance Limit* proposal. The Committee requested an exception be incorporated for candidates with a high model for end-stage liver disease (MELD) scores, as they felt this proposal strongly disadvantaged these candidates. They noted that they felt that the Committee's concerns were not addressed by the OPTN Board of Directors, and this experience is likely reminiscent for the Committee since there is a lack of representation of the Committee in these discussions.

A member who participated in the split liver variance proposal commented that that proposal was developed over a year and a half, and although it may have been described as a painful process, they indicated that the comments they received from the community were extremely valuable. They added

that they worry about the loss of granular feedback since the OPTN Expeditious Task Force and OPTN Executive Committee do not have many liver transplant surgeons or hepatologists. The member expressed concern about the possibility of relying on one or two people to represent something that will impact the entire country.

The Vice Chair voiced their concerns with this proposal, as they feel it is favoring the OPOs and not transplant programs or patients. The OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee Chair echoed previous sentiments, noting that pediatric candidates rely heavily on access to broader sharing and these variances may allow bypassing them on match runs. They suggested making the language more specific to show that the intent is to increase expedited placement of organs at risk of non-use, then it should be required that these variances address those types of organs. The Chair agreed, adding that just because a process may be easier in terms of placement, it may not be as good for the overall system, and it might not be changing or improving organ non-use. They also recommended that the policy around the variance include specific language in terms of prioritizing non-use rather than just ease of placement for the OPOs.

A member of the Committee, who is a patient, noted that this conversation suggested that there is an adversarial relationship between transplant programs and OPOs when in reality, the discussion is about how to help everybody do the best they can to establish creative partnerships and come up with better innovative ways, in the hopes to help save and heal lives. The member added that they are supportive of the monitoring of this proposal to ensure that protocols are not having unintended consequences as well as hopefully identify protocols that will help increase efficiency.

Next steps:

Feedback will be compiled and posted to the OPTN website on behalf of the Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee.

2. Liver Offer Filters Presentation

The Committee received a presentation regarding voluntary liver offer filters.

Summary of discussion:

Decision: No decisions were made regarding this item.

A member commented that it is important for offer filters to not be applied to transplant programs automatically without their knowledge.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue to provide feedback on the development of voluntary liver offer filters as needed.

Upcoming Meetings

- February 2, 2024 @ 2pm ET (teleconference)
- February 16, 2024 @ 2pm ET (teleconference)

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Scott Biggins
 - Shimul Shah
 - Allison Kwong
 - Christine Radolovic
 - Colleen Reed
 - James Pomposelli
 - Joseph DiNorcia
 - Kathy Campbell
 - Lloyd Brown
 - Shunji Nagai
 - Vanessa Pucciarelli
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Jim Bowman
- **SRTR Staff**
 - Jack Lake
 - Katie Audette
 - Ryo Hirose
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Betsy Gans
 - Carlos Martinez
 - Cole Fox
 - Erin Schnellinger
 - James Alcorn
 - Joel Newman
 - Katrina Gauntt
 - Kayla Balfour
 - Lindsay Larkin
 - Meghan McDermott
 - Niyati Upadhyay
 - Rob McTier
 - Susan Tlusty
- **Other**
 - Emily Perito (Chair of the OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee)
 - Jennifer Lau (Visiting Board Member)